

Saving

TEXAS HISTORY



The Texas General Land Office
Archives and Records Newsletter

Jerry Patterson, Commissioner

*Vol. 8 Number 2 * Fall 2011*

Invoking Crockett's Name

by James Harkins

Few names elicit as much of a reaction in Texas history as David Crockett. He was a legend in his own time, and a pop-culture phenom matched by few others after his demise on March 6,



Crockett is seen swinging his rifle as the mission falls to the Mexican Army. "Fall of the Alamo" by Robert Jenkins Onderdonk, oil on canvas, 1903. Courtesy of the Friends of the Governor's Mansion.

1836 at the Alamo. It's no wonder then that after his death, his name has been repeatedly invoked by those who were with him in Texas in early 1836. For Texans, what name but "Crockett" could lend as much credibility or standing to the testimony of a soldier or family member applying for land? The man was a legend, and because of his status it was advantageous for soldiers and witnesses alike to link their names to his when making a claim. Consequently, Crockett appears in the records of the General Land Office Archives on many land claims and associated documents.

Much of Crockett's persona comes from his portrayal as a self-made frontiersman who roamed the hills of western Tennessee hunting bears with just a knife, Ol' Betsy (his rifle), and a few "mon-

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Saving Texas History is a publication of the Archives and Records Program of the Texas General Land Office. It is published quarterly and is available by request or online at www.savetexas-history.org.

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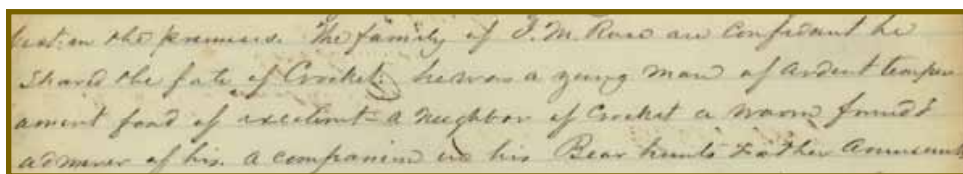
*John N. Rose to J.C. Collingsworth,
Commissioner of Claims. Galveston.
September 1, 1857. Court of Claims file
#7115.*

been heard from since.”³

While there is debate about whether or not Rose was with Crockett when the latter left Tennessee, there is no debate that Crockett met hundreds of individuals along the way to Texas. Many of these men decided they would go to Texas if Crockett was going, too.⁴ Dr. John W. Thomson, as attested by 39 pages of testimony at the Land Office, came to Texas to meet up with Crockett, and did so at Washington-on-the-Brazos. Thomson “... was going from Washington, as far west as Crockett went. He was going to Crockett, and then with him and he started with that view.”⁵ Thomson’s nephew Ruffin Thomson testified “the reason why my uncle wished to go to the Alamo was to get with Crockett.”⁶

Once in San Antonio, Crockett, Rose, and several other Americans, presumably including Thomson, were guests of Almaron and Suzannah Dickinson. In 1853, Suzannah Bellows (Dickinson) testified that she “... was acquainted with a man by the name of ‘Rose’ who with David Crockett was frequently an inmate of my house, and that when the Army of Mexico advanced upon the town said Rose, Crockett and all the Americans took refuge in the Alamo ...”⁷

David Harmon testified that he left Jefferson, Texas as a young boy to enlist in the army and met Crockett and James Bowie in San Antonio. Harmon claimed another soldier asked Crockett if he thought there was any chance for a fight, because they were contemplating going home. “Col. Crockett said there had been plenty of men there to take the town, but that the men were going away as fast as they came, and remarked that if



John Rose testifies that his brother, James M. Rose frequently went on bear hunts with Crockett in Tennessee.

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grel” dogs that “could be found prowling around the ‘country carts any market day’ back in Tennessee.”¹ Imagery of Crockett embarking upon a bear hunt is found in the Court of Claims Collection at the Land Office. John N. Rose applied for land on behalf of his massacred brother, James M. Rose, in 1857. In describing his brother, John said that James was “... a neighbor of Crockett & warm friend & admirer of his, a companion in his bear hunts & other amusements and was inseparable” (from Crockett).²

According to Rose’s family, James left for Texas with Crockett in the fall of 1835, contrary to many historians’ recounting of the story. Rose’s family testified that he “certainly left Tennessee with him [Crockett] & has never



Ruffin Thomson, nephew of Dr. John F. Thomson, expresses his uncle's desire to follow Crockett anywhere, even the Alamo. Ruffin Thomson to J.R. Russell. Terry, Mississippi. December 10, 1880. Special Acts 476.

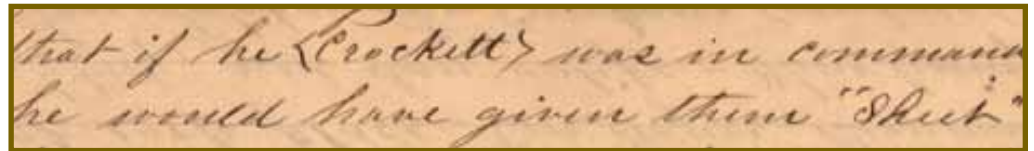
he (Crockett) was in command he would have given them 'Sheet' long ago..." If true, this account offers a glimpse into Crockett's command style and non-nonsense approach to military strategy. It also suggests he didn't necessarily agree with the way commanders were handling their men. Harmon described how orders given by Crockett steered him clear of the Mexican onslaught at the Alamo. "Crockett asked me if I was a soldier," Harmon said. He stated that Crockett told Bowie that "here was a man who would undertake to go back for reinforcements," all the way to Jefferson, Liberty, and San Felipe to bring more men to San Antonio. "Col. Bowie remarked that I looked very young to be a soldier." Testimony points out that Harmon's commanding officer joked with Bowie that Harmon was like the "Irishman's Pig, 'Little but 'ould.'"⁸

Dozens of other soldiers have testimony, or a bounty or donation certificate that simply states, "For having fallen with Crockett, Bowie and Travis at the Alamo on March 6, 1836." This was a claim only 187 men could make.

"As is often the case when a great man dies in a great way, Crockett's reputation as a man of rare prowess and courage was magnified."⁹ Crockett was so revered, that just by mentioning his name, claims for land seemed more legitimate. Some may have embellished their interactions with him, while others

told grisly tales of his death and their escape. Either way, his name was often used to hammer home one point: These settlers deserved land, and their experiences with Crockett should be good enough to prove it.

For more information about David Crockett, please contact the Archives and Records of the General Land Office. ✨



David Harmon recounts that if Crockett had been in command in San Antonio, he [Crockett] wouldn't have allowed soldiers to leave town prior to the siege. David Harmon testimony. Orange County, TX. February 18, 1885. Republic Donation Voucher #1205.

Footnotes

- ¹ Voss, Frederick S. 1988. Portraying an American Original: The Likenesses of Davy Crockett. The Southwestern Historical Quarterly. 91(4). P 457-482.
- ² John N. Rose to J.C. Collingsworth, Commissioner of Claims. Galveston. September 1, 1857. Court of Claims file #7115. Archives and Records. Texas General Land Office. Austin, TX.
- ³ John N. Rose to J.C. Collingsworth, Commissioner of Claims. Galveston. September 1, 1857. Court of Claims file #7115. Archives and Records. Texas General Land Office. Austin, TX.
- ⁴ Davis, William C. 1998. Three Roads to the Alamo: The Lives and Fortunes of David Crockett, James Bowie, and William Barret Travis. Harper Perennial. P 408-417.
- ⁵ Testimony of William Gilmer on April 12, 1859 to Judge William P. Martin of the Giles County Tennessee. (Special Acts 476. Archives and Records. Texas General Land Office. Austin, TX.)
- ⁶ Ruffin Thomson to J.R. Russell. Terry, Mississippi. December 10, 1880. (Special Acts 476. Archives and Records. Texas General Land Office. Austin, TX.)
- ⁷ Suzannah Bellows Testimony to Commissioner of Claims. Harris County. November 21, 1853. Court of Claims file #7115. Archives and Records. Texas General Land Office. Austin, TX.
- ⁸ David Harmon testimony. Orange County, TX. February 18, 1885. Republic Donation Voucher #1205. Archives and Records. Texas General Land Office. Austin, TX. Harmon testifies on behalf of several other veterans from Captain David Garner's Company around the same time, but he makes no other detailed mention of Crockett.
- ⁹ Voss, Frederick S. 1988. Portraying an American Original: The Likenesses of Davy Crockett. The Southwestern Historical Quarterly. 91(4), p. 475.

The 2nd Annual Save Texas History Symposium *The Texas Revolution at 175: Onward was the Cry!*

by James Harkins



Commissioner Jerry Patterson speaks at last year's Save Texas History Symposium.

Onward was the cry for Texian soldiers rebelling against Mexico 175 years ago. This year, the Texas General Land Office Save Texas History program marches onward with the 2nd Annual Save Texas History Symposium on Saturday, October 1. This event will celebrate Texas' victory over Mexico, and commemorate the valiant revolutionaries.

After the overwhelming success of the inaugural symposium, this year's event has moved to a bigger venue, the AT&T Executive Education and Conference Center on the campus of The University of Texas at Austin.

"Building on last year's success, the Symposium has become the cornerstone event for the Save Texas History program," said Jerry Patterson, Commissioner of

the Texas General Land Office. "With more than 200 anticipated attendees and guests, it's the biggest outreach effort of the year for the Archives."

Morning speakers include Dr. Gene Smith, Curator of History at the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History, who will be speaking about Manifest Destiny as one cause of the Texas Revolution. Dr. Smith co-wrote *Filibusters and Expansionists: Jeffersonian Manifest Destiny, 1800-1821*, with Frank L. Owsley, Jr. (University of Alabama Press, 1997). Also speaking will be James P. Bevill, author of *The Paper Republic: The Struggle for Money, Credit and Independence in the Republic of Texas* (Bright Sky Press, 2009). Bevill will discuss how the early provisional government paid for a war without much more than its word for credit. Dr. Stephen Hardin, author of several books, including *Texian Iliad: A Military History of the Texas Revolution* (University of Texas Press, 1996) will speak about the military strategy of the war. Also speaking will be Dr. Gregg Dimmick, author of *Sea of Mud: The Retreat of the Mexican Army after San Jacinto, An Archeological Investigation* (Texas State Historical Association, 2006). Dr. Dimmick will close the morning session with the story of the Mexican retreat across Texas.

The Symposium will feature two new breakout sessions in the afternoon. One will be a panel discussion led by Dr. Alwyn Barr, which will examine people whose roles in the Revolution are seldom told. Highlighted will be the roles of Tejanos, women and blacks during the Revolution, and how these groups fit into the overall picture of the war. This discussion will feature David McDonald, author of *Jose Antonio Navarro: In Search of the American Dream in Nineteenth-Century Texas* (Texas State Historical Association, 2010). Also featured on this panel will be Dr. Jean Stuntz, author of *Hers, His & Theirs: Community Property Law in Spain & Early Texas* (Texas Tech University Press, 2005). Professor Andrew Torget from the University of North Texas will discuss the experience of slaves in



Last year's Symposium attendees learned how to set type on an old-fashioned printing press.

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Don't
Miss It!

...
OFFICIAL POSTER
OF THE
SAVE TEXAS HISTORY SYMPOSIUM
...



Tile vignettes highlighting pencil and color sketches.

The STH Symposium's first commemorative poster captures the theme "Onward was the Cry!" the 175th Anniversary of the Texas Revolution by premier Texas history illustrator Gary Zaboly. It will be for sale during the Symposium with the proceeds benefitting the Save Texas History program.

Zaboly's unparalleled artistry, backed by solid historical research, has made him the premier Texas history illustrator in the nation. Gary has illustrated dozens of books and articles related to Texas history, including the landmark *Texian Iliad* (Stephen Hardin, UT Press 1994), *Sacrificed at the Alamo: Tragedy and Triumph in the Texas Revolution* (Richard Bruce Winders, State House Press 2004) and the upcoming *An Altar For Their Sons: The Alamo and the Texas Revolution in Contemporary Newspaper Accounts* (Gary Zaboly, State House Press, September 2011). His artwork appears in permanent exhibitions at The Alamo and at the Lake George Historical Association. It is highly sought after and graces many public and private collections.

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AT THE SYMPOSIUM OR GO TO
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Texas and how the issue of slavery was one of the lesser-discussed reasons the Revolution was fought. Torget is known for several digital projects, including the *Valley of Shadows* and the *Texas Slavery Project* online.

Another new breakout session is geared toward Texas history educators, specifically fourth- and seventh-grade teachers. This two-hour workshop will feature presentations by Steve Cure, the Director of Educational Services for the Texas State Historical Association; Christiana Hanson of the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum; and Buck Cole of the Land Office Archives. This workshop was created to give teachers a single source to learn about educational resources available for Texas history. Included in this session will be a town hall-style discussion to give teachers input into what they would like to see in the classroom. Eight CPE credits will be offered to all teachers who attend the Symposium.

The highlight of the Symposium will be tours of the Archives, featuring documents and letters that many Texas heroes actually wrote or handled. Among the documents to be displayed are the bounty land grant for Davy Crockett, Stephen F. Austin's Registro, touching first-hand accounts of

SYMPOSIUM AT A GLANCE

WHEN

Saturday, October 1, 8 am – 5 pm

WHERE

AT&T Executive Education and Conference Center
1900 University Avenue
Austin, Texas 78705

REGISTRATION COST

\$50

TO REGISTER, CONTACT JAMES HARKINS

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james.harkins@glo.texas.gov

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soldiers, maps drawn by famed short-story writer O. Henry, first-hand accounts from Republic of Texas Navy seamen, and documents dealing with German immigration. The state-of-the-art Land Office ScanLab will also be shown.

This year will also feature a two-hour genealogical workshop that examines genealogical resources in the Travis County Archives, with a presentation by Travis County archivist Chirstie Moilanen. Also featured will be Aaron Holt with the National Archives, who will discuss genealogical resources at that institution. A presentation about the genealogical resources in the Land Office Archives will be given by James Harkins, and information about using DNA for genealogical purposes will be given by Mary Alice Dell.

In addition, attendees can survey part of the “40 Acres” on the campus of the University of Texas. A pioneer land surveying workshop will teach attendees how land surveyors worked more than a century ago, using some of the same tools that early surveyors would have used. Several vendors and exhibitors will also be on hand for the Symposium, providing shopping opportunities for attendees.

Remember, registration is limited. If you would like to attend this event, please call James Harkins at 512.463.3289 or send an email to james.harkins@glo.texas.gov, or visit the Symposium web page at www.savetexashistory.org. ✨

Thanks to our Symposium Sponsors

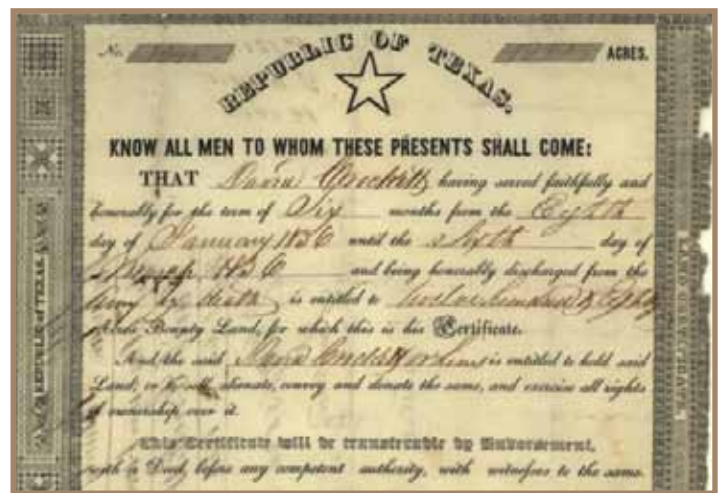


sponsor listing as of September 13, 2011

David Crockett Bounty Certificate

by John Molleston

At the start of the Texas Revolution, the General Council promised land grants to volunteers who joined the armed resistance against the Mexican government. This offer of land for military service and the fight against despotism attracted many volunteers from the United States, none more famous than frontier legend David Crockett. Crockett arrived in Nacogdoches in early January 1836 and was mustered into the army, swearing allegiance to the provisional Government of Texas or “any future republican Government that may be hereafter declared.” David Crockett’s death at the battle of the Alamo on March 6, 1836 was one of the many sacrifices made by these volunteers to secure this republican government—the Republic of Texas.



The David Crockett Bounty Certificate that his heirs received for him being “honorably discharged from the Army by death.” David Crockett Bounty Certificate #1295.

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Land that was granted to the heirs of David Crockett in Hood County with Certificate #1295. Map #4981.

After the Revolution, the new Republic of Texas began issuing land grant certificates to those who rendered military service. On Dec. 23, 1837, Secretary of War Bernard Bee issued bounty certificate #1295 to the heirs of David Crockett. This certificate entitled the heirs to locate up to 1,280 acres of land on the vacant public domain. It states that David Crockett served from the “Eighth day of January 1836 until the Sixth day of March 1836, and being honorably discharged from the Army by death.”

Almost two decades after the certificate was issued, his heirs arrived in Texas and located 1,280 acres of land in present-day Hood County, a new home for David Crockett’s widow Elizabeth and son Robert. They, like thousands of other new immigrants, began a new life in a new country, secured by the sacrifices of David Crockett and the men and women of the Texas Revolution. ✱

Caring for Your Family History

by Lauren Goodley

Genealogists and family history buffs visit the General Land Office Archives every day to find documents and information about their ancestors. However, many folks also keep family heirlooms and documents in their homes. These items have been passed down from family member to family member, often finding their way to those with an interest in history. Are there family documents, artifacts, books, or photographs entrusted to your care? There are some basic steps you can take to keep them in good condition and ensure that future generations can enjoy them as you have.

First, it may be possible to donate your items to a local archival repository. Contact your local historical society or community archives and inquire about their collection policy to see if this is an option for you. This way, your family history will be preserved for your community and available for research.

If you decide to keep your documents, here are a few things you can do to prolong their life and use.

Environment

Most documents are made of organic materials. Paper, whether in the form of letters, documents or as a backing on photographs, is made from wood pulp, or in some cases linen rags. Clothing can be made from cotton, linen or wool. These materials naturally decay over time. One way to slow this process is through controlling the temperature and humidity of the storage area. Most homes are kept at a constant temperature in the summer and the winter, and humidity is likewise generally controlled indoors. You will be doing your items a great service by keeping them inside in a closet or drawer, rather than in a shed or garage. It’s also better to store them off the floor, not under the bed



Bound volume is kept stable with cotton cord, and stored in an acid-free box. Any box will do, and you can stuff it with paper to keep the book from shifting when the box is moved or bumped.

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Photos are housed in Mylar (polyester or polypropylene are also good choices, otherwise just use a folder), and an acid-free folder.

for example, in case of flooding from rain or plumbing issues.

Housing

Your items also need support and protection from light and dust. Documents can be stored flat or in file folders, depending upon their size, and photographs can be stored in plastic or paper sleeves or folders. You can purchase file folders from any office supply store, just make sure they are labeled “acid-free.” This is important because acid can leach into your documents, adding to their fragility and brittleness. You can also take it a step further and purchase supplies from an archival supply store, such as Gaylord, Hollinger Metal Edge, or Light Impressions.

Photographs are particularly vulnerable to damage because of their complex structure. An important step is to remove photographs from traditional “magnetic” photo albums. These are very damaging over time, as the adhesive can decay and stick to photographs, and magnetized sheets cause damage to the emulsion, or image. The best thing you can do for these photographs is to remove them from albums and place them in folders or plastic sleeves made of either Mylar, polyester, or polypropylene.

Books can be stored flat. It's best to remove any letters or documents that may have been folded and placed between the pages. These can be unfolded and stored in a folder.

All materials will benefit from being stored in a cardboard or archival box. This will protect items from dust and dirt in the air as well as from light.

Handling and Use

Materials should be handled with clean hands, on a flat surface such as a kitchen table. Photographs should be handled by the edges or with clean cotton gloves. Cotton gloves are not advisable for use with paper documents or books, because they make your fingertips less sensitive and thus a bit clumsier in handling. Books should be supported with both hands, and not be allowed to open flat if this causes stress on the binding.

How you decide to handle your documents is an exercise in risk management. For example, the joy of passing family photos around the room may outweigh the risk of fingerprints or tears. You may want to frame a particular document and display it on the wall. One solution is to make scans of your precious documents and use them for viewing and display. In fact, many archives display their photographs in exhibits this way. Just be sure to keep a second copy of the digitized images on a hard drive in another location. You can even partner with a friend or family member to store copies of each other's images on your hard drives.



Documents are placed in folders, and stored upright in a box. Documents can be stored flat as well.

Whatever you choose to do with your documents, now you have some suggestions to help you care for them. Future generations of Texans will thank you. ✨

Latest in Long Line of Spanish Translators Retires

As long as the Texas General Land Office has existed, it has always had a Spanish translator. The 1837 Act that established the agency authorized the Texas Land Commissioner to appoint a translator at a salary of \$2,000 a year, this at a time when the Chief Clerk pulled in \$1,600 a year. “The translator has been losing ground to the Chief Clerk ever since,” mourned Galen Greaser, the recently retired Spanish translator. “When I jokingly brought the situation to the attention of long-time GLO Chief Clerk Jack Giberson, he responded in his classic Texas drawl that he’d see what he could do. Every time I brought it up, I got the same answer. He never took me up on what I thought was a fair proposition: Add our salaries and split them down the middle.”



Galen Greaser.

It's a common misperception that the position of Land Office translator is mandated by the state constitution, although it is in the Texas Natural Resources Code.

Several individuals of note have held this position, which gives it a certain historical cachet, but the downside is an added sense of responsibility to uphold the legacy. Among the notable holders of the position is Thomas G. Western, the agency's first translator. “His application for the job listed as references President Sam Houston, General Thomas Rusk and Anson Jones,” Greaser said. “He got the job.” French-born Xavier Blanchard Debray worked as Land Office translator before joining the Confederate army, where he rose from the rank of lieutenant colonel and commander of Debray's Texas Cavalry battalion to an appointment as brigadier general. After the war he returned to the agency for another long stint as translator. James Walker began his outstanding Land Office career as the Spanish translator before ascending to Chief Clerk and then Commissioner—a trifecta not likely to be repeated soon.

When Greaser hired on as translator in January 1984, the position's continuity had been broken. “My predecessor quit the job on short notice, leaving only a few brief notes of instruction, so part of the fun in the early years was learning the job from scratch,” he said. “It was also about that time that the GLO began adopting computer and word processing technology in its operations, with the growing pains that went along with it.” Greaser had to translate the “Old 300” document three times as old word processing applications were discarded at the agency, and of course, proved incompatible with the new ones. Perhaps rivaling these tribulations was the saga of the William Pelham Humphries grant.

To Request a Speaker

to discuss Land Office genealogical
resources with your group or society,

please call

512.463.5277

or email

archives@glo.texas.gov.

“During the 1980s and early 90s, it seemed like every other person seeking our assistance wanted information on the William Humphries grant,” Greaser said. “The Humphries grant is the site of the Spindletop discovery that launched the Texas oil boom. For years Humphries heirs came to the Land Office from hither and yon hoping to find a fortune that they believed was theirs. I always thought that we missed a beat by not selling Humphries souvenirs. We could have funded our conservation program years ago from the sale of Humphries mugs and tee shirts.”

This promising source of revenue took a hit when a federal judge in Beaumont, tired of repeated legal efforts

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Do you “like” Texas history?

Love Texas history? Then “like” the new Save Texas History Facebook page! Get the latest news about the Texas General Land Office conservation and education program, including upcoming events, contests, media and Texas history trivia.

Watch for opportunities to win maps and other Save Texas History collectibles. Give STH a thumbs up to be entered in STH drawings. Keep up with your Save Texas History friends today! ✨



by the heirs, fined the attorney for the heirs and the president of their association. “May the ghost of Pelham Humphries rest in peace and no longer haunt the corridors of the federal courthouses,” was the long-suffering judge’s parting shot.

Other groups and individuals, with roots in South Texas, have also shown a dogged determination to recover mineral proceeds they believed is owed them. This prompted Greaser, in part, to research and write the “New Guide to Spanish and Mexican Land Grants in South Texas.” Greaser modestly hopes the guide, along with his “Catalogue of the Spanish Collection of the Texas General Land Office,” which he wrote in two parts, will be what his tenure is remembered for.

Greaser described his 27 plus years at the Land Office as a career-long learning experience, in which any given document may give up an unexpected secret, even after repeated examination. He also drew satisfaction from providing a level of service appreciated by Archives and Records customers. ✨

THE ALAMO BECOMES A STAR

JUNE 1914 AND THE SHRINE OF TEXAS
LIBERTY HITS THE SILVER SCREEN



This week in Texas History, brought to you by this station and the Save Texas History program of the General Land Office.

June 1, 1914. San Antonio. A new silent film premieres at the Royal Theatre a few blocks from the Alamo.

“The Siege and Fall of the Alamo” is the first feature film about the legendary Battle of 1836. It is also the first and only such film shot at the Alamo.

At a cost of \$35,000 and with two thousand extras, the film is a hit. but today, only a few still photos remain. Unfortunately, no print of this film has ever been found.

The Alamo became a star 91 years ago.
This Week in Texas History.

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